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Exiled Albanian king 'upset' over failed coup

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JOHANNESBURG, South Africa

Exiled King Leka of Albania was reported 'extremely upset' Wednesday over a failed attempt by members of his National Liberation Army to overthrow the Communist government of his native land.

Albania announced Tuesday it had 'liquidated' an armed force of Albanian emigres who landed on its coast by boat Saturday night in a bid to topple the Communist government in the tiny, isolated Balkan country.

'My husband told me he was extremely upset over the news,' Queen Susan, told UPI in Johannesburg, South Africa, where she and Leka live in exile. Leka spoke to his wife in a phone call from Paris.

The Australian-born Susan said Leka, a towering 6-foot 9-inch man with military bearing, was 'not actively' involved in preparations for the coup bid but was 'very sad that good men had been killed.'

The landing party, which carried automatic weapons, radios and special subversive equipment, 'was overcome in five hours, the Albanians said.

It was not clear whether all those 'liquidated' were actually killed, or merely captured.

In Paris, the 43-year-old Leka told the France Soir newspaper that he considered the mission virtual suicide and had asked its commander to 'postpone it, if not cancel it.'

He confirmed the armed emigres were members of his 'National Liberation Army.'

Leka, who was taken from Albania by his father King Zog in 1939 at the age of two days because of an invasion by Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, refused to reveal any details of the operation, claiming they were military secrets.

Leka told France Soir the commando leader, identified by Albanian authorities after the thwarted landing as Xhevdet Mustafa, was one of his supporters, a 45-year-old exile who lived for many years in New Zealand.

'Responsible for a group of fighters belonging to our National Liberation Army,' Leka said, 'he put together an operation which had appeared to us to be so suicidal that we had asked him to postpone it, if not cancel it.'

France-Soir said Leka claimed to head an army of exiles who have already participated in a number of 'destabilization operations' inside Albania.

Leka has said several times during the past ten years he is organizing an armed coup against the Tirana regime.

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